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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 18, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROBERT B. ADERHOLT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EXEMPTIONS

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, throughout history, nothing has more profound impact on the world than the consequences of war; but as we examine that history, we often see the greatest devastation is in its aftermath, starvation, chaos, instability, retribution, unleashing a chain of events that continues centuries later, as we are currently seeing in the Balkans.

The destructive power of today's military weapons and techniques used

to develop them and practice with them can leave in its wake danger for generations to come. The consequences of past military action are not just limited to the mine fields in the Balkans or Asia or Africa. There is a toxic legacy right here in the United States as a result of 2 centuries of testing, training, weapons manufacturing from unexploded bombs to nuclear waste. This affects millions of acres of land, actually in some cases inside city limits to some of the otherwise most pristine countryside in America.

The good news is not only are our Armed Forces the most powerful fighting force the world has ever seen, but they know how to deal with environmental problems. Given the right resources and instructions, they are not just ready, but eager, to do a world-class job of clean up.

The bad news is that as part of its approach to denying problems and avoiding the costs and consequences of its activities, this administration is pursuing policies that would avoid responsibility for environmental impact. For example, just last week the subject of Thursday's hearing in the Committee on Armed Services was a proposal from the administration to exempt the Department of Defense from five key environmental laws from the Clean Air Act to the Endangered Species Act.

These laws not only protect endangered species and eco-systems, they protect the health of people living on and around military bases. If the exemptions were granted, American taxpayers and State and local governments would bear the burden of clean-up costs and face public health risks from toxic contamination resulting from military operations. The evidence shows there is no reasonable case for such exemptions. The environmental laws already allow the Department of Defense to apply for exemptions on a case-by-case basis if they really need it. Both the GAO and EPA Adminis-

trator Whitman have testified that environmental laws have not affected military readiness. There is no evidence that the military has ever been refused an exemption from laws that were necessary and that they sought it.

Even with the current environmental laws in place, sadly, the Department of Defense has too often fallen short of the mark on environmental and public health. A critical area that I have been working on deals with unexploded ordnance: the bombs, missiles, shells that are scattered throughout the United States in all 50 States. We have made progress, but we have got a long way to go. We have millions of acres of current or former military installations spread across the 50 States that contain unknown numbers of high-explosive military munitions that failed to explode when dropped or fired or which were buried for disposal.

In 1998, the Defense Science Board found that we were simply ill equipped to address the unexploded ordnance challenge. We have been working with a bipartisan group of men and women in Congress to address this issue. We have been making headway, but we have got a long way to go. If we were to exempt the Pentagon from its responsibility for environmental clean up, it would be absolutely the wrong direction. Congress instead should be funding and encouraging the clean up, not exempting the Department of Defense from environmental laws.

At the current rate of clean up, it is going to take us hundreds of years to be able to solve this problem. And that is at the current rate of funding. The President's budget just cut \$400 million from the Department of Defense environmental programs.

Putting off the toxic legacy of past military activities means we must delay the ultimate cleanup, we put more families at risk, and we set a terrible precedent as we ask others to obey environmental laws and respect nature at home and abroad.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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In preparing to protect this country, the administration should not give the Department of Defense authority to put at risk the environment that Americans cherish and the clean and healthy communities it demands. As the largest owner of infrastructure in the world, and sadly, as the biggest polluter, the Department of Defense should be setting the best example, not getting permission from Congress to cut corners on the protection of the environment and the health of our community. We should be working together in these troubled times to make our community healthy, safe, and economically secure.

TAX CUTS AFFECT NEW JERSEY PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this week, probably tomorrow and Thursday, we will probably have a final vote Thursday on the Republican budget resolution in the House; and I wanted to speak to that resolution today because I think it really sets a terrible precedent for where we are going in terms of spending programs, tax cuts, as well as the economy in general, which as we all know has experienced a major downturn in the last year or so.

My major point is this, that essentially what the President is doing, what the Republicans are doing in this budget is to give huge tax cuts, primarily to wealthy Americans and to corporate interests. As a result of that, there will be a major slash of programs that are important to the average American and also a major increase in the deficit. A few years ago under President Clinton we actually had a surplus with the budget. We were paying down our debt. We were paying back the Social Security and Medicare trust funds. Now the opposite is happening.

With this Republican budget, which the President essentially supports, we are building huge deficits once again. We are borrowing from the Social Security trust fund. We are borrowing from the Medicare trust fund. And those two retirement security programs, basically Social Security and Medicare, the day when they will go broke or will run out of funds will come closer and closer because of the drain on those trust funds and their resources.

But, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see that over the weekend, in fact Sunday, in the New York Times there was an editorial that basically says how I feel with regard to the Republican budget and gives some information of which I would like to read certain sections.

It is entitled, "How Tax Cuts Trickle Down." In the beginning it says, Mr.

Speaker, "In a sorry effort to protect President Bush's tax cut mania, the Republican leaders of Congress have unveiled proposals for slashing the most basic government programs for years to come. With rationalizations running from tragic to ludicrous, House budgeteers envision cuts of \$470 billion in Medicare, Medicaid, education, child care and other vital programs, from transportation to health care, the environment, to science research." And it goes on. And I will go back and give other sections of it, Mr. Speaker.

But I just wanted to give Members an idea of how these Republican cuts in the budget would specifically affect my State of New Jersey. And keep in mind that the only reason these cuts are being made is to pay for tax cuts to wealthy Americans and corporate interests.

An analysis of the President's budget shows drastic cuts in critical services in New Jersey; and the terrifying fact is that the House Republican budget approved last week in the committee, which we will be voting on tomorrow or Thursday, is even worse than the President's budget in this respect in what it slashes.

In New Jersey, the President's budget cuts \$9.9 million for after-school programs leaving 14,110 children without after-school services through the 21st Century Community Learning Center's program. The President's budget cuts \$1.8 million in teacher-quality funding for New Jersey and cuts funds nationally for grants to improve teacher quality by \$80 million.

Now this is the President who has said that no child should be left behind. The President's budget cuts more than \$27 million in Federal highway funding for New Jersey. The President's budget slashes clean water funding for New Jersey by more than \$20 million this year.

This is so important to my district because my district is primarily along the shore, along the ocean, the Raritan Bay and the Raritan River; and we are dependent on this Federal funding to keep our waters clean and for sewage treatment.

The President's budget cuts more than \$3 million in low-income home energy assistance for New Jerseyans and the President's budget cuts more than \$4 million in community service block grants which provide local organizations the funds to help reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and provide families with the help they need to become fully self-sufficient.

Now, I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker; but I do not want to keep stressing what is happening in my home State, but I have to say that this is happening all over the country.

Now, why are we doing this? Well, the President says it is because of tax cuts. And if I could go back to the New York Times, they say, "The estimated shortfall," this is the deficit now, "of \$2.7 trillion could have been an \$890 bil-

lion surplus but for the Bush proposal, according to the Congressional Budget Office."

So the fact of the matter is, the reason we will have a deficit because of the President's budget is because of tax cuts. The next \$1.4 trillion cut geared to the affluent will average \$80,000 a year for millionaires. So what we are seeing, Mr. Speaker, is primarily we are going into deficit and slashing these programs to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy. The President has suggested otherwise, but there is another New York Times article that gives the specifics and I just wanted to read it to you.

It says, "The average tax cut is over \$1,000," this is what the President is saying, "because a few rich taxpayers would get such large reductions." For example, for households with incomes over \$200,000, the average tax cut is \$12,000; but if you are making less money, you will get about \$300.

HONORING FRANCISCO JAVIER BLANCO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to recognize Mr. Francisco Javier Blanco, a man whose commitment and service to Puerto Rico and the environment has resulted in countless achievements and a legacy that will last for generations.

Mr. Blanco recently retired as director of the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico. During his more than 30 years of dedicated service, Mr. Blanco was responsible for guiding the conservation trust through its formation stage and into the impressive organization that exists today.

The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico, which was created in 1968 through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Interior Department and the Commonwealth Government, is now recognized as a leader among the Nation's land trusts in the area of environmental conservation and preservation.

Under Mr. Blanco's direction, the trust has protected 17,000 acres of land as reserves of incalculable natural, aesthetic, and cultural value. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Blanco, the trust continues to make significant contributions to protect Puerto Rico's environment and important history. The efforts and commitment of Mr. Blanco have left a legacy for Puerto Rico to enjoy for generations to come, and for that we are grateful.

As Resident Commissioner, I am building upon the strong conservation and historic preservation efforts of Mr. Blanco.

□ 1245

The partnership between the Trust, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and